

Background: The Lower Yolo Bypass is the most downstream portion of the Yolo Bypass (Bypass), a massive levied floodway located west the Sacramento River and within Yolo and Solano Counties. The Bypass provides flood conveyance for the cumulative high flows from several northern California waterways to the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta (Delta). In addition to flood conveyance, the Bypass provides critical habitat to a variety of species including numerous bird species and threatened and endangered fish such as the Delta Smelt and Sacramento Splittail. The Bypass also provides recreation opportunities, including widespread hunting and fishing use.

Issues of Concern in the Lower Bypass: For the Lower Bypass (south of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area downstream to Rio Vista), several key issues impact current and future conditions. These include:

- Public land ownership and associated water and land impacts.
- Public use problems (“squatting”, hunting/fishing violations, illegal activities, etc.)
- Lack of emergency services due to the rural and inaccessible nature of many areas
- Flood management problems caused by wave fetch from levee breaches on neglected public lands, poor maintenance of the federal flood control levees on the ship channel, and lack of resources to fix levees in the event of a major flood
- Water quality issues such as mercury methylation
- Competing management demands for flood conveyance, habitat restoration, hunting, and sport fishing.

Project Objectives: To address these issues (and with generous funding support from the California Department of Fish and Game), the Delta Protection Commission and the Yolo Basin Foundation are co-sponsoring **The Lower Yolo Bypass Planning Forum** (Forum). The Forum will seek to achieve what no single affected stakeholder and associated agency / organization has achieved to date; the collaborative creation of a mutually beneficial, mutually agreed on, long-range management strategy for the Lower Bypass. The Forum Group will be comprised of representatives from national, state, and local government agencies, as well as private land owners and recreation enthusiasts. Participation is completely voluntary and based on the assumption that all interest groups will be given equal weight in the decision/recommendation making process.

Project Activities: The project was started in early January. Initial completed tasks include:

- Development of initial outreach materials,
- Confirmation and coordination of likely participating stakeholders
- Coordination and design of a Project Kickoff Field Tour of the project area,
- Coordination and design of an initial stakeholder discussion / BBQ following the tour,

Tasks to be completed in first quarter calendar year 2008 include:

- Conduct Kickoff Field Tour (February)
- Conduct Initial Stakeholder Discussion / BBQ (February)
- Identify preliminary opportunities and constraints (March/April)
- Identify key stakeholder education components for subsequent Forum meetings (March)
- Prepare draft and final Forum Operating Rules, communication protocols, and Outreach Plan (April)